

THE ECONOMIC COST OF GUN VIOLENCE IN NEW JERSEY

In recent years, New Jersey has experienced an average of 280 gun-related homicides, 184 gun-related suicides, 764 non-fatal interpersonal shootings, and 599 unintentional shootings per year.ⁱ New Jersey has the sixth-lowest number of gun deaths per capita among the states. Nevertheless, **gun violence in the state exacts a high physical, emotional, and financial toll on families and communities.** We often hear about the heartbreak and physical pain these shootings cause, but there is another aspect of the gun violence epidemic that doesn't receive as much attention: the overwhelming financial cost.

TALLYING THE NUMBERS

The 2,014 shootings that occur each year in New Jersey are a serious drain on the state's economy. Based on the expenses we can directly measure, including **healthcare costs** (\$93 million per year), **law enforcement and criminal justice expenses** (\$131 million per year), **costs to employers** (\$8 million per year), and **lost income** (\$918 million per year), the initial price tag of gun violence in New Jersey is over \$1.2 billion per year. Much of this tab is picked up by the public. Up to 85% of gunshot victims, for example, are either uninsured or on some form of publicly funded insurance. Additionally, law enforcement efforts are funded entirely by taxpayer dollars. **As a result, gun violence costs New Jersey taxpayers approximately \$273 million each year.**ⁱⁱ

GUN VIOLENCE IS BAD FOR BUSINESS

New Jersey's business community is severely impacted by the negative economic consequences of gun violence. Shootings engender fear in affected neighborhoods, keeping potential customers away, forcing businesses to relocate or limit hours of operation, and decreasing foreign and local tourism.

A 2016 report by the Urban Institute found that in Washington DC **each additional homicide was associated with the loss of two retail or service establishments** in the following year.

A volley of shots fired recently in a northern New Jersey shopping mall caused chaos and confusion, as terrified shoppers reported fleeing and hiding for hours in closets, offices, and bathrooms. Additionally, the mall was closed for over a day—keeping customers away and causing revenue losses. With over 1,000 shootings occurring each year throughout the state, it's easy to see how the economy is directly impacted by gun violence.

Conversely, reducing shootings improves local economies. The same Urban Institute report found that in Minneapolis **just one fewer gun homicide was associated with the creation of 80 jobs and an additional \$9.4 million in sales** across all businesses the following year.

**\$1.2+
BILLION**

TOTAL DIRECTLY
MEASURABLE
COSTS

giffordslawcenter.org

When the reduced quality of life attributable to pain and suffering (\$2.1 billion) is considered, the overall estimate of the economic cost of gun violence rises to **\$3.3 billion per year**. Although this number is staggering, it actually understates the true cost of gun violence in New Jersey because it doesn't include significant, yet difficult-to-measure costs, including lost business opportunities, lowered property values, and reductions in the tax base.

REDUCING GUN VIOLENCE

There is much work to be done. Fortunately, a number of proven solutions exist to reduce gun violence, including gun safety laws and evidence-based violence prevention and intervention strategies focused on delivering services to those most at risk for participating in violent behavior. The investment required to scale up and expand these lifesaving solutions in New Jersey is minuscule compared to the yearly cost of gun violence in the state.

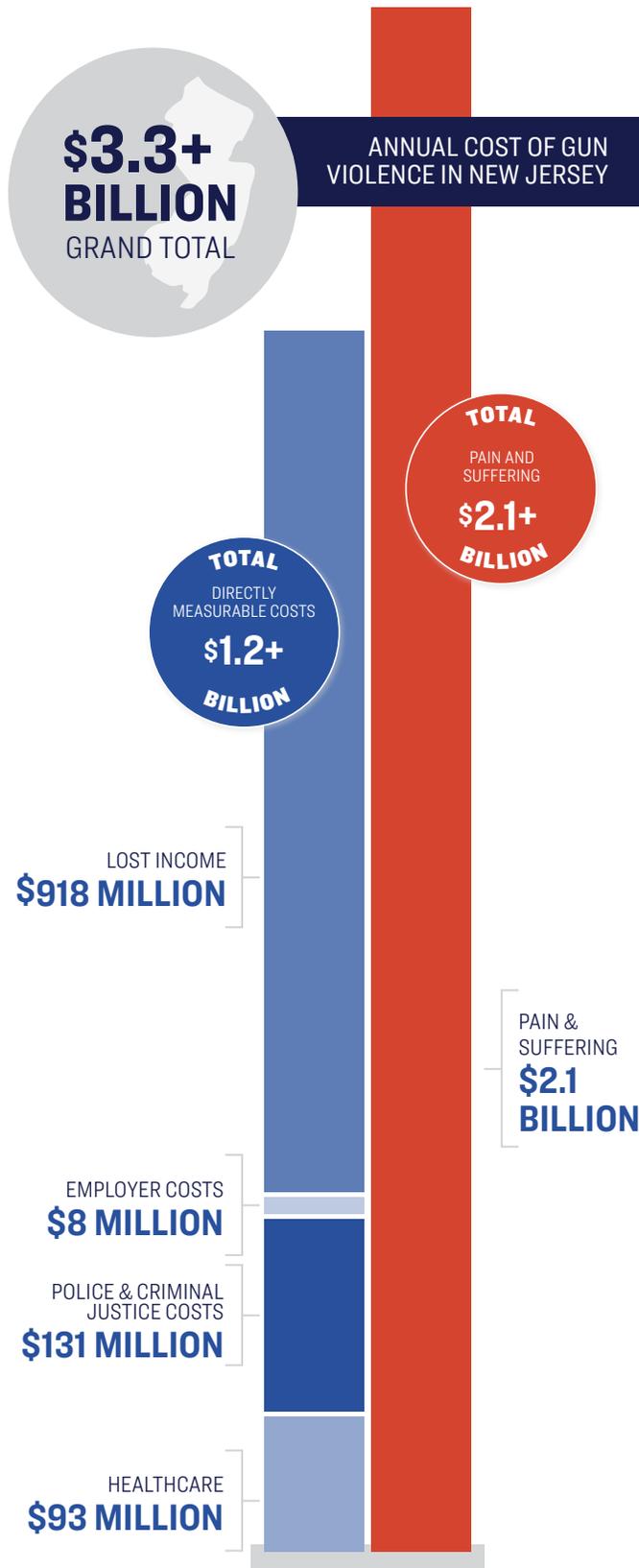
- i. Fatal firearm injury data came from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's WISQARS Fatal Injury Reports (www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html). Non-fatal firearm injury data came from the New Jersey Department of Health's New Jersey Discharge Data Collection System, (www26.state.nj.us/doh-shad/query/selection/ub/UBselection.html).
- ii. Estimates of the cost of gun violence in New Jersey were created using a model of the cost of gun violence published in 2012 by economists at the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE). PIRE is a nonprofit research organization that focuses on using scientific research to inform public policy. This model can be found at www.pire.org/documents/gswcost2010.pdf. All cost estimates were adjusted to 2016 dollars.

WE'RE ON A MISSION TO SAVE LIVES

For nearly 25 years, the legal experts at Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence have been fighting for a safer America by researching, drafting, and defending the laws, policies, and programs proven to save lives from gun violence. Founded in the wake of a 1993 mass shooting in San Francisco, in 2016 the Law Center joined with former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords to form a courageous new force for gun safety that stretches coast to coast.

CONTACT US

media@giffords.org



LEARN ABOUT NEW JERSEY'S GUN LAWS:

lawcenter.giffords.org/NJ